

The idea of imprisonment

By Robert Brown

MICHEL FOUCAULT:
Discipline and Punish:
The Birth of the Prison
Translated by Alan Sheridan
333pp. Allen Lane, £7.50.
Language, Counter-Memory, Practice:
Selected Essays and Interviews
Edited by Donald F. Bouchard
Translated by Donald F. Bouchard
and Sherry Simon
240pp. Oxford: Blackwell, £9.50.

Michel Foucault has become widely known as both a historian of malevolent ideas and a critic of the punitive institutions which most fully express them. With this translation of *Surveiller et punir: Naissance de la prison* at hand, the English-language reader can now contemplate with gloomy satisfaction the array of malignant concepts whose history was begun by Foucault in *Madness and Civilization* and continued in *The Birth of the Clinic*. Our modern concept of criminality resembles our present concepts of illness and madness, he thinks, in being the product of a specific stage of European society, a stage in which all three notions were needed for coercive social roles in the changed economic conditions of the late eighteenth century.

In filling its oppressive role, the concept of criminality profoundly altered our views on judicial punishment, and in the process of doing so helped to produce, by the end of the eighteenth century, the penitential house for disciplining and re-training errant citizens. On Foucault's account, his belief that the penitentiary has always created recidivists rather than penitents should direct us to these basic questions: "Whose economic and political domination is enhanced by a prison system which manufactures criminals? Whose domination is threatened by attempts to abolish it and to reject the ideas concerning the nature of human beings which that system incorporates?" Foucault leads us to these questions but does not try to answer them in this book. Instead, he tries to persuade us that the historical route in France by which he has arrived at them reveals their wider significance for our own political thought and practice.

He begins his account of French judicial punishment by describing the public execution of criminals in 1757, of Damiens for his attempt to kill Louis XV, and then contrasting it with the virtual disappearance, in the first half of the nineteenth century, of such spectacles of terror. They were replaced everywhere in western Europe by increasingly long, public, painful, and prolonged executions. Corporal punishment was no longer the rulers' vengeance inscribed, for public instruction, on the body of the rebellious subject by the most painful means available.

Punishment had changed, Foucault says, from being a ceremony of intimidation and exhortation to defining the legal cancellation of a defaulter's rights; a calculated deterrence was aimed at retaining the allegiance of the citizen, not at subjugating the body of the subject. With this transformation went the disappearance of a judicial procedure whose secrecy and rules of evidence favoured confessions, the punishment of the guilty, and the ability to punish the guilty, which he called the "death penalty" and which he said was "the last of the death penalty" and which he said was "the last of the death penalty" and which he said was "the last of the death penalty".

The interplay between the processes of secret accusation and secret investigation, degrees of proof, degrees of torture, and the ritual of public confession, he says, is not so much explicated by Foucault as it is suggested by the use of torture persisted for so long without radical challenge because torture was believed to be a necessary part of the confessional system and thus lasted until the system itself was abandoned. But Foucault does not go on to explore the connections between the high tolerance of physical pain in the society, the judiciary's willingness to inflict it on the innocent because innocence had to

be proven by ordeal, the use of torture to obtain a confession psychologically satisfactory both to the "tormenting priests" and their confessor, and the apparent reluctance of victims to escape torture by committing suicide. At work here was a set of religious and psychological beliefs which both maintained and justified the confessional system. It was not abandoned until they were no longer held.

Because Foucault is content simply to describe the features of the confessional system rather than to explain its demise throughout western Europe in the early nineteenth century, he is not well prepared to explain the rise of its successor, Rational Penal Reform. Neither is he in as strong a position as he ought to be for making clear the power base, and political appeal, of the reformer's policy of calculated deterrence as against the previous policy of intimidation by re-education. It is true that Foucault claims that with the weakening of the old absolute monarchies, the development of new types of capital accumulation, new relations of production, and new property legislation, a clear distinction arose between punishment applied to the ordinary street crimes of the lower classes and that applied to the white-collar crime of the rising bourgeoisie. For white-collar crimes, he says, there were to be fines and regulatory agencies; for street crimes there were to be reformed, reformed judiciary, a code of graduated deterrents, and a prison system which exerted the maximum reformative pressure on its inmates with the minimum force required. Since the new public of citizens would accept judicial verdicts only when the charges were completely proven, it followed, says Foucault, that the defendant had to be regarded as innocent until proven guilty by the rules of evidence which were in use by ordinary people and which were refined by scientists. Rational deterrence thus demanded certainty of punishment and that, in turn, demanded certainty of evidence.

These are interesting, if somewhat familiar, claims, but unfortunately Foucault gives us no reason for thinking them to be true. For example, the graduation of penalties between white-collar and street crime was not always clear-cut, uttering, forging, and embezzlement were as heavily penalized as any street crime. Moreover, even if we agree with Foucault that the impetus for rational penal reform was connected somehow with the decline of the absolute monarchy and the rise of the bourgeoisie, this tells us nothing about the nature of the connection—which is the only serious point at issue here. Nor does our agreement provide us with any basis for explaining why the movement for prison reform came to advocate just those features which Foucault describes: minimum effective penalties, use of the anticipation of pain rather than pain itself, the deterrence of potential offenders, publication of the legal code, certainty of punishment, and public trial with rational standards of evidence.

It is of no help to assert, as Foucault does, that the deterrent effect required a certainty of punishment which itself depended upon certainty of evidence. It is of no help because, first, under the confessional system the deterrent effect was achieved by the threat of punishment, not by the certainty of punishment; and secondly, he offers us no grounds for believing that certainty of punishment depended upon the decisions of judges and juries who themselves adhered to rational standards. But since Foucault does not refer to this point, he leaves it a mystery why certainty of punishment should, as a certain historical period, come to be thought to depend upon rational methods of proof.

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Battling with the New Barbarians

By Terence Morris

PATRICIA MORGAN:
Delinquent Fantasies
288pp. Temple Smith, £7.50.

For a long time now arguments about the causes and treatment of juvenile delinquency have been mainly dominated by two opposed groups: on the one hand there have been the reformers—sociologists, psychologists, psychoanalysts and naturalists of social policy who have never wavered in their faith that the social sciences could give the chance, provide a blueprint for effective social engineering; on the other have been those who are by nature suspicious of anything produced by the social sciences and who adhere with a comparable tenacity to the idea that all human behaviour may be explained by reference to the most elementary common sense.

From the plethora of research results and theoretical propositions produced by the reformist camp has arisen a synthetic orthodoxy which has had a remarkable fascination for the policy-makers of the Welfare State. It is an orthodoxy grounded in studies of child development that owe their origins to the liberally minded Freudians of a generation ago who were (quite properly) offended by the sight of young delinquents being treated by society in a manner every bit as unpleasant as that in which they had themselves behaved. It was once summarized by a disenchanted sociologist as the "Tavistock Hypothesis": "If you beat your child hard enough when he is young he will kick other people when he grows up." But it is also founded in a good deal of sociological research that tends to show that youngsters who live in areas of urban decay or on vast housing estates, plagued with social problems of every sort from poverty and bad housing to mental illness and suicide, are almost invariably involved in delinquent activities. Delinquents also tend to come from large families or from broken homes—or so some of the data would suggest.

Probably the most important contribution to the synthetic orthodoxy as far as reform of the law relating to the treatment of juveniles is concerned has been "labelling theory". In its debased form it suggests that since the delinquent quality of an action derives not from any intrinsic characteristic of the action but from the process of defining it as delinquent, the application of the "delinquent" label to youngsters ensures that they come to accept this identity, and begin to think of themselves as delinquents, indulging in "secondary deviance". It is therefore part of policy not to impose the label of "delinquency" in the first place if it can be avoided.

One of the problems of the synthetic orthodoxy is that social theory does not always marry well with political theory, not least since political theories, having to emerge into a real world through the compromising processes of legal draftsman and parliamentary procedure, may end up having a very instrumental character. Such was certainly true of the Children and Young Persons legislation that is now the subject of strong feelings on each side. The Longford Committee, many of whose members were ardent "interactionists" without probably ever having heard of "interactionism", worked in isolation from the Seeborn Committee on personal social services. When the Children and Young Persons Act finally reached the courts, not only had the whole of local authority social services been reorganized, but the whole of local government had swallowed something from Alice's bottle and grown very large indeed. But systems have a habit of developing their own justifications and their creators are, generally, like most parents in being reluctant to see the faults of their handiwork. So, with a marriage of positivism (and many of the sociological and psychological theories involved have a highly positivistic flavour) and Fabian welfarism, the new orthodoxy is entrenched.

But to be entrenched is no guarantee against an attack, and Patricia Morgan's *Delinquent Fantasies* can fairly be said to be a bombardment which has landed squarely on target. It is a book which will be greatly resented not only by many sociologists, but also by many of the psychologists of child development with whom the sociologists have been in substantial conflict for a long time.

The author begins by discussing what she calls the New Barbarians, a group not merely in violent and destructive behaviour, but in behaviour lacking the predictable nature of "rational" crime. It is the totally irrational nature of it that makes it so very frightening. For this she will, without doubt, be accused of sensationalism. In the eyes of some of those whom she chooses to criticize most severely she will be held guilty of

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the business crime of "moral panic".

The term "moral panic" has itself been a good deal abused since it was first used by Stanley Cohen who conducted one of the soundest—and most sober—studies of teenage behaviour, concentrating on the Mods and Rockers on their seaside outings and encapsulating in print some of the more absurdly pompous magisterial *chirp* that followed. But it is scarcely a manifestation of "panic" to maintain that the growth of crime on the streets, of persistent vandalism that makes blocks of high-rise flats no longer habitable, of the vilest forms of gang rape and all the other repellent manifestations of youthful boorishness is something towards which the ordinary citizen is utterly intolerant. "Moral panic" is now used rather in the manner in which motorway engineers dismiss deeply felt aesthetic objections to their schemes as "emotional". It is remarkably easy to debate a perfectly legitimate concern by the able use of language. Those who use such language tend to belong to what the author calls the New Establishment and its allies who have air-time on the Open University and access to other resources, media, the changes, she says, which "were to place the problem of delinquency largely in the hands of the New Establishment... had their beginnings in Crime: A Challenge to Us All, a Labour Party Research pamphlet, the report of a group of people headed by Lord Longford, published in 1964".

As one who was a member of that group I feel it only fair to point out that in 1963-64 things were not quite as they are now. Few of us had begun to think seriously about justice because we were too concerned to do something about the frightful state of decay and disorder that then prevailed in the actual treatment of youngsters. There was very little of which the adherents of "traditional" views could be proud, unless they considered that nastiness and petty repression on the part of adults were likely to encourage youngsters to have an enthusiastic commitment to the adult world. I think that I am the only member of the Longford group to have publicly admitted to having been associated with a mistake, but there is a fundamental difference between being mistaken and being guilty of bad faith. Many people associated with other pressure groups which she takes to task—such as the Child Poverty Action Group, Shelter, and the National Council for Civil Liberties—had, and

indeed still have, a concern for those less fortunate than themselves. The point which she does not bring out with sufficient clarity, however, is the link between social and political action in the context of social engineering. Fabianism created within the context of the Labour Party the dangerous belief that it was possible to improve the moral state of mankind by improving its material welfare. This was not an original idea; indeed, it had been hanging around since the days of G. E. Moore and L. T. Hobhouse and peddled to innumerable followers of the Bloomsbury Group and many of the well-bred but politically conscious middle-class students of sociology and politics at the LSE. One suspects that she is less careful than she ought to be in suggesting to her readers that there is some correspondence between the kind of Fabian welfarism, in the policies of which she objects with some cause, and the narrower, fiercer, ideological concerns of Marxism, which have had a far more ardent impact upon the contemporary criminological scene. What infuriates many Marxists is that all the "independent" policy advice committees that are appointed to tell Government what it already wants to hear are content with a form of "welfarism" which entails no radical change in the nature of society. As some people are wont bitterly to observe, some of the best ideas in Hampstead socialism occur while the lawn of the country cottage is being mowed. There is, in fact, a fundamental political tension between the Marxists who look to the New Criminology for the development of a "political economy of crime" and the apostles of bureaucratic welfare who, whether they actually intend it or not, have set course for a society characterized by the existence of welfare ghettos inhabited by the sub-literate, sub-numerate teletext produced by the "comprehensive" school. In the horrid state of society there will be no basis for revolution at all.

The link between welfare and politics is a complex one and perhaps nowhere more so than in the field of child care. Rowley gets his share of stick, but there is nothing very new in this. Miss Kellmer-Friese of the National Children's Bureau does not escape either, having availed herself of "the generous use of the government's health and educational propaganda machine to beam out urgently and repeatedly the need for love". Patricia Morgan does not accept

that it is all to do with inadequate mothering, any more than she accepts that there is any compelling evidence that what passes for treatment or rehabilitative therapy makes the least difference. Or that it is broken homes, or the fact that youngsters are somehow shut out from society and frustrated. Indeed, she attacks ruthlessly and without quarter whole ranges of people and movements that have, in one way or another, created a situation in which there is now a body of received doctrine, a set of policies that can no more be safely challenged than the Tables of the Law themselves. There is always a danger in this kind of attack that the polemicist may succumb to a conspiratorial theory: in the case of the development of policies about juvenile delinquency and welfare, however, there is not much evidence of a conspiracy. There is rather more evidence, one suspects, of anxious politicians and administrators seeking eagerly for new ideas to solve pressing problems. The difficulty that arises is that once policies have been put into legislative effect a devastating inertia prevents their being overturned.

Delinquent Fantasies deserves to be read by several important groups of people, not all of whom are given to reading a great many books. The first group are those social workers, teachers of social work and social work students who have not been seduced by psychoanalysis or any of its adulterated derivatives and who are still in the hands of their own minds. Anyone who thinks that this is just a case of a social critic sounding off between hard covers will find the book to be as carefully documented and referenced as the most respectable academic text. The second group are those who contribute to policy-making behind the scenes, the civil servants in whose power it is to shape the thought of ministers for good or ill, usually on subjects that require rather more homework than many social issues get from busy men of power. The third group are those politicians, outside as well as within Parliament, who effectively determine political priorities as well as political policies.

It is not sufficient to argue that because the fashionable approach to the treatment of delinquency is discredited we should return to the practices of yesterday. They are discredited too, not least for their inefficiency and inhumanity. In the "law and order" debate any simple resort to what is now known in America as the "quick and dirty" solution is unlikely to produce much that is either effective or just. As the book shows all too clearly, the simpler the solution, the greater the circumspection with which it should be treated.

Glass at the Fitzwilliam Museum

A lavishly illustrated catalogue of an exhibition of glass currently taking place at the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge (ending on 26th June). Containing 334 entries covering more than a thousand items, the catalogue traces the history of glass-making from Mesopotamia, where the first glass is thought to have been made, to England and the Continent in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Hard covers £9.50 net. Paperback £2.50 net.

The United Nations System

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The birth of the NRF

By Peter Fawcett

AUGUSTE ANGLÈS:

André Gide et le premier groupe de la Nouvelle Revue Française. La formation du groupe et les années d'apprentissage 1890-1910. 478pp. Paris: Gallimard. 95fr.

Auguste Anglès has written a brilliant history of the origins of the *Nouvelle Revue Française*. Its appeal should be as great to the general reader as to the specialist, whose needs are catered for by the hundred pages of notes and other documentation relegated firmly to the back of the book. But it is chiefly a history of the early years of the twentieth century that M. Anglès has to relate, and a formidable mass of material, published and unpublished, has been absorbed in its preparation. From the opening paragraphs, in which he attempts to capture the shifting sands of Gide's personality in a series of dazzling images, one knows one is in the presence of a master critic.

The NRF was part of the revision of values which characterized the start of the century in France and to which M. Anglès applies the English word "revival" in view of its religious and patriotic overtones. However, unlike the more readily identifiable manifestations of the movement, what the founding fathers of the NRF actually thought has always proved too elusive to grasp. The reader of the early volumes of the review is struck by their homogeneity of tone, but what the various opinions expressed add up to is more difficult to define. It is like meeting a man, M. Anglès suggests, whose opinions we know from his speech and general behaviour but whose personality remains a mystery.

He begins his narrative with Gide at the age of thirty-five, morose and uncertain, surrounded by a circle of friends all connected to the same current. There is Marcel Drouin, his brother-in-law, known in literature as Michel Arnaud, a schoolmaster who suffers from an incurable lack of confidence in his own creative ability; the Belgian-born bank clerk André Rivière, still obsessed with "nichisme" and obstinately writing according to a "geometric" method of composition; the ebullient Henri Ghéon, companion of his immoral escapades and a somewhat unwilling "médécin de campagne". In 1903-4 these four were joined by two further recruits, the undemonstrative Jean Schlumberger, a great-grandson of Goethe and Gide's Norman neighbour, and Jacques Copin, who worried everyone at first by his Jewish appearance and his gushing charm. As a whole they resembled nothing more than a patrol of Boy Scouts, with Gide as their leader and Jacques Rivière, who came later, in the role

of tenderfoot. How they saw their function is best shown in a letter in which Marcel Drouin reproves Gide for not making better use of the total liberty they are happy to see him enjoy though most of them are tied to their jobs.

In 1905 a partnership was formed with Remy de Gourmont to edit *L'Ermitage*, but Gide soon grew tired of being yoked in such unconventional company. There followed an unsuccessful attempt to revive the *Ermitage*, which collapsed when the printer went bankrupt. It was during Gide's absence in Italy in 1908 that the decision was taken by the rest of the group to found a review of their own, which led to the first abortive issue under the editorship of Eugène Monfort, who takes the credit for inventing the title. By this time Gide was bitten, and the NRF began a second life with a new Number 1 in February 1909.

M. Anglès makes the point that the group's news was already in some extent out of date. The resistance they had met from the society of their day meant that they were forced to fight battles which should have been won five or six years earlier. They became caught up in the quarrel between Classicism and Romanticism, which dominated French criticism for a quarter of a century or more, and inevitably they adopted the vocabulary of their age. As a result they were less sensitive than might have been expected to the most recent developments in art round about them. The Futurist manifesto appeared in *Le Figaro* on February 20, 1909; Gide welcomed the Russian ballet at the Châtelet with a brief and uninspiring note. To read the review one would seem to be living in a world altogether different from the Paris of the period.

On the other hand, the fact that the group had waited so long for a vehicle to express their own views meant that, when they acquired it, they were fully prepared to use it as effectively as possible. They had the good fortune to arrive on the scene at a time when those by whom they set most store—Gide and Claudel—were reaching their fullest development. In the second year of the review's existence they were able to shake off the heritage of Classicism versus Romanticism and in turn their attention directly to the real questions, celles que posent le monde d'aujourd'hui et ses rapports avec l'homme. For years, as M. Anglès puts it, a network of reflections had formed around those questions in which the group was eager to catch whatever game passed its way; it was unfortunate that the prey they captured was rarely as interesting as the meshes of the net in which they caught it.

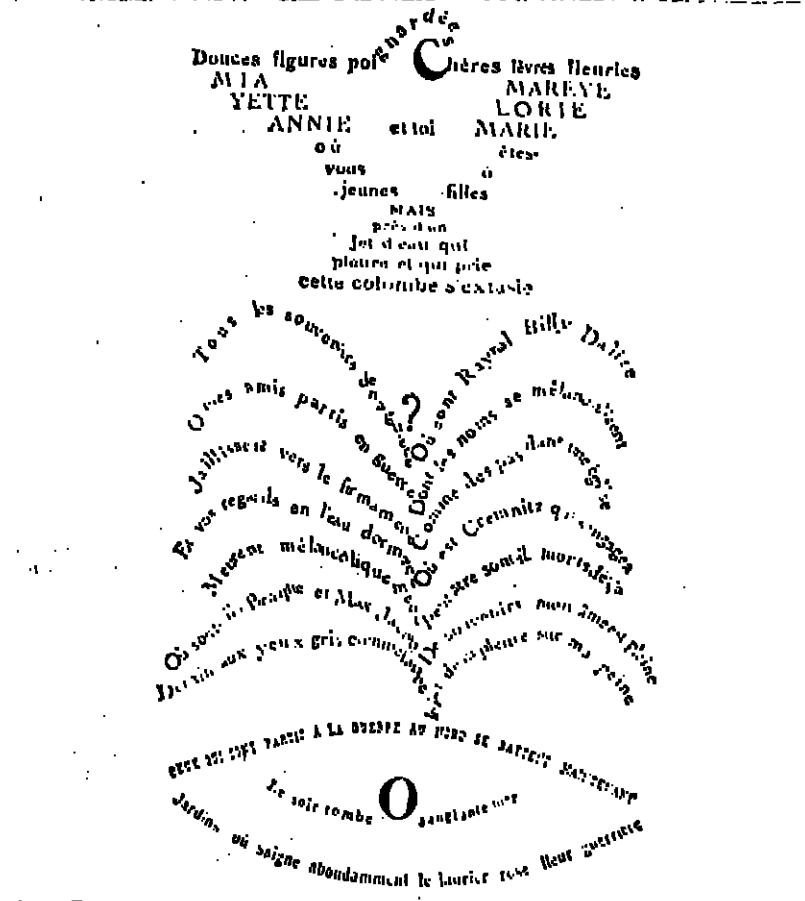
The success of the review depended largely on the catholicity of its contents. Believing as they did that art was more a matter of "ton" or "tendance" than of ideas, the group was prepared to accept contributions from all quarters. Individual numbers were compiled

according to an elaborate system of compensation which Gide complicated to excess and which his frequent absences repeatedly reduced to the level of precarious farce. Claudel's *Magnificat* was balanced by a poem of the Comtesse de Noailles which moreover preceded it in the "sonnette". In the next issue a dispirited account of Italy Week in Spain and some *propos* of Walt Whitman were even further removed from the religious counterweight was provided by a chapter of Chesterton's *Orthodoxy* translated by Claudel. And so on. But, if the NRF survived, it was as a tribute to Gide's tireless diplomacy and endless involvement in the review's affairs; for once he seemed to have found a field of action which suited him, that of a literary entrepreneur, and for the best part of two years the usual sequence of headaches, insomnia and other malaises disappeared from his life.

None of these men was simple. It is not the least triumph of M. Anglès's study that he manages to respect their complexity at the same

time as keeping his narrative wonderfully alive and controlling. One is reminded of the "petites bobines vivantes" to which Gide compared his characters in the *Journal des Poux-Monopoles*. His approach is like that of an entomologist, attentive to the slightest sound or movement, emitting from the tiny creatures beneath his gaze. Chapters of analysis of the review's contents alternate with descriptions of the material circumstances out of which it grew. His method is best described by the two terms he extracts from Rivière's own remarks about a short text entitled *Le Voyage en chemin de fer*: "cette fidélité du chemin de fer au relief, cette façon qu'il a de le pénétrer par insinuation." (My italics)

He combines something of the "clairvoyance" and "admiration" he praises in Michel Arnaud's pioneering article on Péguy.



"The Stabbed Dove and the Fountain" by Apollinaire, reproduced in *Visible Language* 11:3 (subscription \$13. Box 1972 CMA, Cleveland, Ohio 44106). Nina S. Hollander's edition in *Apollinaire and Claudel* provides concrete translations of their visual poems and an analysis of the difference between Claudel's ideograms (written signs of an idea) and Apollinaire's calligrammes (beautiful written objects).

How to write a life

By P. N. Furbank

Biography: A New Interdisciplinary Quarterly, Volume 1, Number 1. Honolulu: University Press of Hawaii. \$1.50.

Should give a warm welcome to the new quarterly published from the Biographical Center at Hawaii, the aim of which is "to stimulate the critical judgment of life-writing by presenting new information, sharper insights, fresh interpretations, and well-argued evaluations."

In 1910, preoccupied at the time with the figure of Charles-Louis de Montesquieu, I was recently dead, into a symbol of the day. Throughout the history of the literary form, it was to be seen constantly at different points in the history of the review, always in contact with Péguy and his members of the group, and finally forced to face up to the literary questions of the end of the year, it was going to become apparent that the one hand and the other, the young Turks of the French left on the one hand, these spoke of "l'homme" "simplicité", the NRF was wedded to the concept of "profondité" and "complexité".

At the end of this year, warning up, M. Anglès plotted the first two years of his course he had at the NRF. He has both the temperate of a long-distance runner, barely begun to draw breath. Without the NRF, the publishing-house of Gallimard, most of its editions, present-day directness, delayed the publication of Anglès's thesis for a year since the debut script was handed over to the aid of a grant by the Centre National des Lettres. It is to be hoped that the volume will acquire the momentum it deserves, and which will be helped by a prompt translation of the mountain is too much for M. Anglès's own plan the four laps that bring his story up to the fruits of his inquiry as soon as possible in a volume which presents a number of even greater importance, the first, including the young and well-known Gallimard as "agent" of posed "conjoint d'édition".

Elsewhere in this issue of *Biography*, Roger Howell is skilful in demolishing various psychobiographies of Cromwell (no very hard task); and A. Owen Aldridge, author of *Voltaire and the Century of Light*, is most interesting and acute about problems in writing Voltaire's life. His essay is in part an attack on Theodor Besterman and his policy of ignoring "external opinion" (contemporary anecdotes, panegyrics or attacks, etc.) in favour of the author's own words—words which, says Aldridge, "produces in essence reconstructed autobiography, that is, an arrangement by a second person of a man's opinion of himself and his career. This is just the sort of article, I imagine, that would be the magazine's best reason d'être."

Picture paper

Michael Hirst

History, Volume 1, Number 1. Edited by John Onians. Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Birth of this native art-historical journal is a notable event. Art history is published for the Association of Art Historians by Routledge and Kegan Paul and is planned to appear four times a year. British historical periodicals have been few in number to keep pace with the volume of studies in the art-historical field, and the appearance of a new journal is to be greeted with enthusiasm by the editors. Although one cannot help wondering why its name has been chosen, the translation of an existing journal quarterly.

The first issue contains seven articles of very varied length, interest and subject. The spread of topics from Paleolithic representations of box heads and the male vulva to a study of William de Paget's painting of Pegasus Bay—must presume, a reflection of appropriations expressed in the journal, some of which are described in the language of hope will not prove characteristic. We are even told that in search for new fields to conquer, no language will be excluded. The man that the Camelot has must find itself for setting articles in Japanese.

History is excellently edited, and without the footnotes which follow its text, the layout and appearance is attractive. There are more grounds

Supporting cast

By D. A. N. Jones

That ingenious linguistic philosopher, Horne Tooke, claimed that "where" was the feminine of "hiring", and "hiring" the feminine of "varlet". He was concerned to suggest that wage-earners, servants and whores were all exploited, i.e. prostituted. Following up Horne Tooke's way of thinking, we may note that *ponos* means, literally, a hired person—and that "porn" means commercial. So that when Roy Fuller wrote, in his celebrated *Encounter* article (October 1977) that one of the magazines subsidized by his Arts Council literature panel was, in his view, "often pornographic, occasionally obscene", he was indirectly making a good case for discontinuing its subsidy. If a journal is sufficiently pornographic, and known to be so, it should be commercially viable without aid.

The point about *porn* is that it attracts and repels at the same time. Roy Fuller was concerned with the repellency factor. He claimed that *Ambit*, the journal in question, was, on occasion, "likely to be highly offensive, in a non-artistic, non-literary way, to a substantial proportion of the public who paid for it". This year, *Ambit* is not receiving a grant (though it will still benefit from the Arts Council's imaginative scheme for subsidizing distribution of little magazines to libraries). Some of the members of the literature panel don't much like *Bananas*, but other do, and the dissenters are assuaged enough to accept the recommendation of other respectable—literally "respectable": I don't mean "stodgy"—literary figures. Personally, I think *Bananas* has published some very good writing. Roy Fuller has also said that "the bestowal of money for the arts inevitably attracts the idle, the dotty, the minimally talented, the self-promoters." So do the arts. Petronius Arbiter was idle, Marcel Proust was dotty, McGonagall was minimally talented, Walt Whitman was a self-promoter. We

would be the poorer without them. But I have great sympathy with Roy Fuller, given sat on a local arts council and withered at paying out money for what I think trash. There is an irritating fellow in Simon Gray's play, *Otherwise Engaged*, who keeps asking: "is it any good?" It is surely essential that subsidizing committees decide, first of all, whether there is a case for saying a potential recipient is "any good" before deciding to fund it.

One of the little literary magazines used to have an angel. He put in £5,000 and got about two-thirds back; a young man, short-haired, he told me he had read only one piece in it which he liked very much, but he "thought it would be a pity if it went under" and he did not like the idea that such magazines should fall under "state control". Now the checks and balances against "state control" in any branch of the media are enormous, in this country. Michael Schmidt, in an influential broadcast talk about the Arts Council (*The Listener*, 20 October 1977), began by worrying that for the state to provide money for the arts is at least potentially a political act. The Arts Council, like the BBC, he claimed, operates on "the buffer principle", shielding the arts from party politics. Surely, this is perfectly true; and there is really nothing for Mr Schmidt to worry about in this direction.

But the angel's other argument—"it would be a pity if it went under"—is very strong, not only among public-spirited persons in the private sector (like himself) but among private persons in the public sector. There are powerful in another sense—decent old buffers who think plenty of little magazines are run by duffers, and dotty duffers at that, but still don't want to see them go under. Roy Fuller and I, W. Lambers of *The Sunday Times* have both shrugged kindly while handing out Arts Council money to projects that they think silly; but, as private citizens writing journalism, they have afterwards expressed their personal opinions, and their eloquence in the public domain is probably more dangerous to the

project: they dislike them more, and in the privacy of the committee.

Ambit is not the only magazine that has not received the grant it hoped for. There is *Frenchman*, too. *Ambit* (Roy Fuller did not like *Ambit*, either) and *Aquarius* (I think *Ambit* is, primarily, a north-western journal and could be supported by its region, but *Aquarius* is a different case. The Arts Council can be accused of leaning towards elitism—the cultural colonialism of the middle classes)—or of populist demagoguery—"let's all swear like the workers swear"—and these are real dangers. But between the two comes a tradition which one might, very crudely, call *Crab Street* Bohemia, the world of Filzrovia and the 1940s in which there was much of value. That strain still survives and *Aquarius* represents it, but the next *Aquarius* is going to be "regional".

Figured is a special case. It has the disadvantage, like *Encounter*, of being political: it is dedicated to the editors' ideas about socialism and the working class. (*Encounter*, however, has an Arts Council grant for its literary section—which is surely proper—and its political section wins enviable support from private sources.) It is natural that some should suspect that political bias has crept in here. *Tribuna*, ever valiant for liberty, suggested as much. Melvyn Bragg, the present chairman of the Arts Council Literature Panel, wrote back to *Tribuna* (June 2, 1978), rather indignant at this accusation, and I feel sure that Bragg's committee came to their conclusion, rightly or wrongly, on the basis of "is it any good?", not "What's its political bias?"

A final point needs to be noticed. One principle in subsidizing is the principle of helping lame ducks. Another is building on success. Should the *New Review*—which, although starved, still shrugs kindly while handing out Arts Council money to projects that they think silly; but, as private citizens writing journalism, they have afterwards expressed their personal opinions, and their eloquence in the public domain is probably more dangerous to the

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CLASSIFIED ADVERTISEMENTS

Assistant
Librarians AP 2/3

Wanted by Essex Libraries

Enthusiastic Young Librarians

£2,529 to £3,282 per annum plus up to £312 annual salary supplement, plus Stage 2 supplement.

Can you contribute to the further development of one of the largest library services in the country? If so, then Essex, which has over 100 service points and 850 staff, could be the place for you.

Following a major reappraisal of our service we have established a new decentralized structure. This is based on five Divisions comprising 13 Area Teams of qualified staff who now spend their time purely on professional duties. The additional Assistant Librarians we require must, therefore, be able both to play a full part in the successful development of these Teams and also to contribute to the reorganization of the Library Service.

If you are looking for a demanding and satisfying job where your ideas and enthusiasm do matter, then Essex is for you. Quite simply, Essex County Library is on the move and offers a unique opportunity to those who need our high expectations. Area Teams are based at Chelmsford, Southend, Colchester, Grays, Harlow, Loughton, Saffron Walden, Braintree, Clacton, Brentwood, Basildon, Rayleigh and Hadleigh. The exact location of vacancies will be known towards the end of June but it is anticipated that there will be posts available in all Area Teams.

Further details of these posts together with a report on the reorganization are available from Barry Langdon, County Library Headquarters, Goldway Gardens, Chelmsford, Essex, to whom applications should be sent, quoting reference number 32/78, together with the names of two referees by July 3, 1978. For informal discussion ring Philip Hawkins or Peter Reeve on Chelmsford 51141.

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